



Early Childhood Legislative Update

Early childhood policy took center stage during the 2014 legislative session! Legislation passed to statutorily create the Office of Early Childhood, expand School Readiness opportunities for 1,020 children, increase Care4Kids rates for the first time in 13 years, approve a child care collective bargaining contract, increase rates for School Readiness and Child Day Care Centers, and establish a grant program to allow for preschool expansion in public schools.

Putting the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) into legislative statute enables the integration of programs for young children into a child and family-centered agency. It gives OEC the statutory authority over the programs it oversees, which includes: School Readiness, Child Day Care Centers, Care4Kids, Child Care and Youth Camp Licensing, Connecticut Charts a Course, Children's Trust Fund, and the federal Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting grant program.

Below are highlights of major early childhood legislation and funding that passed in the legislative session.

Pre-K Expansion

- Expansion of 1,020 School Readiness preschool slots in the Priority and Competitive School Districts and Alliance Districts.
- Establishment of Smart Start, a competitive grant program to allow for preschool expansion in public school settings where unmet need is demonstrated.
- Funding to support creation of a statewide universal pre-k plan and local and regional early childhood planning grants.

Rate Increases, Quality and Professional Development

- Increase in the rate from \$8,346 to \$8,670 for full-day School Readiness programs.
- 3% rate increase for state-funded Child Day Care Centers.
- Funding for child care collective bargaining agreement which provides rate increases, professional development opportunities and other incentives for licensed family child care providers and family, friend and neighbor providers accepting Care4Kids subsidies.
- 3% rate increase for licensed child care centers accepting Care4Kids.
- Funding for quality enhancements and Accreditation Facilitation Project.
- Partial restoration of previous rescissions to state Head Start Supplement programs.

Local Infrastructure Support

- Grants-in-aid for facility improvements and minor capital repairs for School Readiness and Child Day Care Center programs.
- Bonding allocated over 10 years for public schools to renovate classrooms to make them appropriate for preschool classrooms under Smart Start.

Additional Staffing Capacity

- Forty new positions: 28 staff for licensing to allow for annual child care inspections and increase capacity to process background checks; 4 staff for a quality improvement system; 3 staff for the Smart Start Program; and 2 staff to improve internal capacity.

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NGA Policy Academy: Improving Learning Outcomes from Early Childhood Through 3rd Grade

Connecticut was selected by the National Governor's Association (NGA) as one of six states to participate in the NGA Policy Academy: *Building a Foundation for Student Success: State Strategies to Improve Learning Outcomes from Early Childhood through 3rd Grade*. This 15-month policy academy provided funding and technical assistance starting in July 2013 and will end in October 2014. CT's Policy Academy Team is comprised of staff from the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), State Department of Education (SDE), the CT Association of Schools (CAS), and the CT Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS).

One of the outcomes of the Academy was the Governor's Policy Symposium held on April 14, 2014. Key stakeholders from school districts, boards of education, state and local elected officials, union officials, business leaders, elementary principals, community early childhood leaders, policy leaders and philanthropy attended. Guest speakers included Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan, from Columbia University's Teachers College, Virginia and Leonard Marx Professor of Early Childhood and Family Policy; Co-director, National Center for Children and Families, Dr. Kristie Kauerz, Research Assistant Professor from the University of Washington College of Education; and Dr. Steven Tozer, Professor in Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) and founding coordinator of the UIC Ed.D Program in Urban Education Leadership. The goals of the Symposium were to:

- Increase knowledge of "PreK-3rd Grade" as a key education policy agenda;
- Understand how CT's new Early Learning and Development Standards birth to age 5 are a foundation for this work; and,
- Elevate understanding of the importance of leadership in PreK through 3rd Grade.

Additionally, Governor Malloy, Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor and Commissioner Stefan Pryor provided remarks supporting a Connecticut policy focus on the important and unique developmental period of early childhood, age 3 to grade 3.



Following the morning symposium, a Leadership Roundtable was convened. The roundtable provided an opportunity for focused discussion on educational leadership as a lever for P-3 reforms. State and local policies and leadership issues that impact Connecticut's ability to implement a high-quality P-3 continuum throughout the state were explored with guidance from Dr. Kauerz and Dr. Tozer.

Additional efforts of CT's participation in the Policy Academy include:

- Collaborative work groups to create tools to support the teacher evaluation process from birth to grade 2. Current draft documents include an *Evidence Guide for PreK through Grade 2* to provide examples of what leaders and evaluators should look for in classrooms, based on the *CT Core of Teaching Rubric*, as well as a *Guide for Considerations for Teacher Evaluation Birth to Grade 2*.
- The development and dissemination of A *Principal's Guide to CT's new ELDS*.

Connecticut's NGA Policy Academy Team convened a retreat in June in an effort to create a broader statewide stakeholder team to develop strategies to enhance and expand our state's PreK-3rd Grade strategy to improve student development and learning in the early grades.

Triple P CT Parenting Program Launches

In May, the Office of Early Childhood launched its Triple P CT parenting program in Hartford. Triple P, the Positive Parenting Program, is an international, evidence-based parenting and family support system that helps parents and families deal with challenging behaviors and the stresses of everyday parenting. The program offers a number of support options including seminars with other parents, group sessions, private sessions with Triple P practitioners and one-on-one support.

Currently, 140 practitioners throughout Hartford and Northeastern Connecticut have been certified in the Triple P approach. The Triple P practitioners include librarians, school social workers, guidance counselors and family resource aides, early care and education providers, family center staff, health care providers, counselors, case managers and others.

Most Triple P programs are free. For more information about Triple P CT, including tips, lists of Triple P practitioners and frequently asked questions, visit the Triple P CT website at www.triplepct.com or call Help Me Grow at 1-800-505-7000.

Scholarship Applications Now Accepted Year-Round

The Office of Early Childhood has made a significant number of improvements to the Early Childhood Professional Registry (www.ccacregistry.org), including the ability to now accept scholarship applications throughout the year. During the 2014 fiscal year, over \$900,000 was awarded for scholarship assistance mainly toward Early Childhood degree and credential advancement. For scholarship information including eligibility and instructions for applying via the Registry, visit the OEC's Charts-A-Course website at www.ctcharts.org and click on the scholarship assistance fund information in the updates section. Being a member of the Registry is free!

Early Learning and Development Standards

In late June, the Office of Early Childhood distributed copies of the new Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), ELDS Action Guides and ELDS posters to providers throughout the state. Copies of the ELDS were mailed to all licensed child care centers and group homes, public and parochial schools, pediatricians, libraries, Family Resource Centers and Regional Education Service Centers. In addition, Action Guides in English and Spanish were sent to licensed family child care homes and unlicensed Care4Kids providers. Quantities of Action Guides were also provided to pediatricians, libraries and Family Resource Centers for distribution to families. All materials are also available online on the Office of Early Childhood website at www.ct.gov/oec/elds.



Licensing Transition

On July 1, 2014, the Community Based Regulation Section of the Department of Public Health (DPH), which issues licenses and inspects child care programs and youth camps, will become the Division of Licensing in the new Office of Early Childhood (OEC).

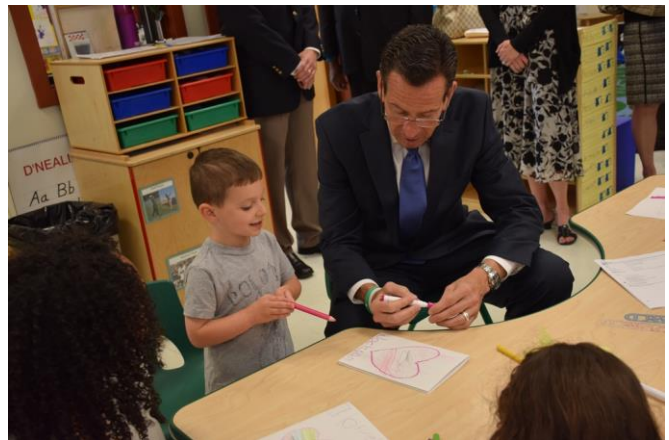
Department of Public Health child care and youth camp licensing staff will now become Office of Early Childhood staff. OEC and DPH have been working together over the past year to make the move as smooth as possible. Child care providers and families should not experience any immediate change. For example, the mailing address and contact phone numbers will stay the same. However, in the coming year the OEC will shift to annual licensing inspections for all licensed providers.

Letters were sent to licensed youth camps and child care providers, in English and Spanish, notifying them of the change. To visit the new Division of Licensing website, go to www.ct.gov/oec/licensing.

Allocation of School Readiness Expansion

In June, Governor Dannel P. Malloy and the Office of Early Childhood announced the allocation plan for the 1,020 additional School Readiness spaces included in this fiscal year's budget. The announcement was made at the preschool program at the YMCA in Meriden which received 30 expansion spaces. A total of 46 towns and cities were awarded a portion of the 1,020 spaces. In determining the allocation, the first priority for spaces went to programs that demonstrated high-quality. Secondly, OEC wanted to ensure that every community that requested spaces received some of the expansion. Thanks to this expansion, 1,020 Connecticut preschoolers who may not have otherwise been able to attend preschool are now able to go to a high-quality preschool program this fall.

For more information and details about the expansion, go to www.ct.gov/oec/upk.



Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships

Recently, the funding opportunity for Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships was announced and applications are currently being accepted for this \$500 million effort to increase the quality of infant care nationwide. These federal grants will allow new or existing Early Head Start programs to partner with local child care centers and family child care providers serving infants and toddlers from low-income families.

We understand that the misalignment between the federal and state Care4Kids eligibility criteria was an obstacle for previous applications. Those planning to apply for funds can now use the new Care4Kids priority group created during this past legislative session and directly related to EHS-CC Partnerships. Legislative

language is in Section 224 of [P.A. 14-217](#):

(c) The commissioner shall establish eligibility and program standards including, but not limited to: ..., and (G) any household with a child or children participating in the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership federal grant program for a period of up to twelve months based on Early Head Start eligibility criteria.

We look forward to strong and successful applicants to offer Early Head Start comprehensive services that benefit children, families and teachers. To request a letter of support from the Office of Early Childhood, please notify Loree Armstrong at loree.armstrong@ct.gov.

Help Me Grow Campaign

The Office of Early Childhood launched the three-month *Help Me Grow Campaign* in April with a series of Community Cafés in Bridgeport, Danbury, the Lower Naugatuck Valley, Hartford, Killingly, Putnam, Sterling, Plainfield, Middletown, New Britain, Norwalk and Stamford.

The goal of the campaign is to increase awareness of the critical need for universal developmental screening of children birth to five years of age and linkage of at-risk children to supports and services they need to be ready for school.

The Community Cafés in April gave parents the opportunity to participate in guided, meaningful conversations about children's healthy growth and development and to learn more about community resources to support their children's development.

In May, the communities registered families to receive parent questionnaires through the mail from *Help Me Grow* that will help them track their children's development until the age of five years. While the numbers aren't all in yet, more than 600 families were registered during the campaign. This month communities are hosting free screening events for two-year-olds across the state.

As a backdrop to campaign activities, 23 Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) trainings have been conducted in campaign communities. Three hundred and forty nine new ASQ-users have been trained. If each of these new ASQ-users screen 20 children in the next year, that's nearly 7,000 children who will be screened and linked to services as needed.

For information on ASQ trainings, contact Deborah Watson at deborah.watson@ct.gov. To receive copies of the new colorful and engaging *Help Me Grow* growth charts, call *Help Me Grow* at 1-800-505-7000.



Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), together with the Department of Public Health (DPH), wants to learn from you! Please complete this brief survey on your program's policies and professional development needs related to physical activity and nutrition. We will use this information with our partners to align resources and opportunities for training with your needs. We hope that you find the process of completing this tool informative to you as well about your program's policies and practices related to physical activity and healthy eating.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ECEPROGRAMSPDASSESSMENT>

Important: This survey should be completed only once per program and preferably by Program Directors only.

This survey will close at the end of the day on July 14th. One lucky early child education program that completes the survey will win the *Be Choosy, Be Healthy* Activity Kit from Lakeshore Educational Products! A winner will be announced by July 18th.



Please contact Marcia Maillard at Marcia.Maillard@ct.gov or Kari Sullivan at Kari.Sullivan@ct.gov with any questions related to the survey.

All Staff Meeting



On May 15, the Office of Early Childhood held an agency-wide meeting to foster collaboration, leadership, and readiness for change. The energy throughout the meeting was incredible, with the staff expressing their excitement around the recently passed legislation creating the agency and upcoming transitions. Highlights of the day included congratulations from the Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman on the agency's recent codification in statute, a leadership workshop led by David O'Brien of WorkChoice Solutions encouraging all staff to explore their inner leader, and a discussion led by Commissioner Jones-Taylor about the kind of agency we aspire to be.



Bond Fund RFP and Technical Assistance

The second Request for Proposals (RFP) for Minor Capital Improvements for early care and education settings was released in June. Approximately \$13.5 million in bond funds will be granted for facility improvements and minor capital repairs. These funds are intended to help address building and site deficiencies, and to promote the health, safety and learning of children in appropriate environments. The repairs must be done to the part(s) of the facilities that house funded school readiness programs (within priority school districts and competitive communities) and state-funded child day care centers, where children are currently located or will be relocated. Proposals are due on or before Friday, August 22, 2014, at 4 P.M.

Technical Assistance Sessions to assist child care programs' staff on conducting self-assessment of programs' minor repair needs and on preparing minor renovation funding requests, including RFP-responsive proposals, have taken place throughout the state. The last session is scheduled for mid-July in the Middletown area.

To download a copy of the RFP and other up-to-date information, go to:

- Office of Early Childhood Web page at <http://www.ct.gov/oec/rfp>, or
- Connecticut State Department of Education Web page at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2683&Q=320346>.

Questions specifically related to the RFP and its procurement process must be emailed to Amparo García at amparo.garcia@ct.gov.



Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood

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